

CLAIMS

1. A device (22) comprising:
 - a receiver (33) for receiving a signal indicative of a level of a consumable in a component (30a) being below a threshold;
 - an output module (35) responsive to the receiver for indicating that the component requires replacement;
 - an input module (38) for receiving a signal indicative of an instruction to order the component; and
 - a messenger (39) responsive to the input module for sending signals onto a communications network representing an order for a replacement component.
2. A device according to claim 1, including an aggregator (34) for aggregating level signals over a period of time, the messenger (39) being for sending signals representing an order for each replacement component for which an order instruction signal was received by the input module.
3. A system comprising:
 - a level detector (30b) for detecting if a level of a consumable in a component (30a) is below a threshold;
 - an output module (35) responsive to the level detector for indicating that the component requires replacing;
 - an input module (38) for receiving a signal indicative of an instruction to order the component; and
 - a messenger (39) responsive to the input module for sending signals onto a communications network (24) representing an order for a replacement component.
4. A system as claimed in claim 3, including an aggregator (34) for aggregating signals from plural level detectors, each associated with a respective component, the messenger (39) being for sending signals

representing an order for each replacement component for which an order instruction signal was received by the input module.

5. A method comprising:

automatically determining if a level of a consumable in a component (30a) is below a threshold;

if a positive determination is made, indicating that the component requires replacing;

awaiting a signal indicative of an instruction to order the component;

10 and

in response to receiving the instruction signal, sending via a communications network (24) signals representing an order for a replacement component.

15 6. A device (22), comprising

a receiver (33) for receiving a signal in respect of each of plural components (30a) indicative of a level of a consumable in that component being below a threshold;

an aggregator (34) for aggregating the received signals and for
20 generating a composite order therefrom; and

a messenger (39) responsive to the aggregator for sending signals onto a communications network representing an order for components in the composite order.

25 7. A system comprising:

a plurality of level detectors (30b), each level detector being for detecting if a level of a consumable in a respective component (30a) is below a threshold and for sending a representative signal in response; and

an aggregator (34; 25) for aggregating signals from the level detectors
30 and for generating a composite order therefrom.

8. A system as claimed in claim 7, comprising:

a messenger (39) responsive to the aggregator for sending signals onto a communication network representing an order for components in the composite order.

- 5 9. A method comprising:
determining if a level of a consumable in each of two or more components (30a) in one or more devices is below a respective threshold;
sending an order signal to an aggregator (34; 25); and
in the aggregator, aggregating signals in respect of each of the
10 components to form an aggregate component order.

10. A method as claimed in claim 9, comprising sending signals onto a communications network (24) representing an order for the components included in the aggregate component order.

15

20